

REMARKS

The Applicants have carefully reviewed and considered the Office Action of 1 December 2005 which sets forth final rejections of all of the pending claims.

Entry of this Amendment is appropriate under 37 CFR 1.116 because the Applicants are adopting the Examiner's suggestion for defining over the prior art and placing the claims in condition for formal allowance.

More specifically, independent claims 1 and 13 now explicitly provide that the first and second layers are made from different fiber formulations. Support for this Amendment is found in the specification at, for example, the first full paragraph on page 8 of the specification.

A. Claims 1-5, 9-15 and 19-22 clearly patentably distinguish over U.S. Patent 5,616,408 to Oleszczuk et al. or U.S. Patent 5,804,512 to Lickfield et al.

In the Office Action of 1 December 2005, the Examiner noted that, "the claims do not distinguish between the first, second, and third layers. Therefore, a single mass of wet processed bonded fibrous mat comprising thermoplastic polymer staple fibers and thermoplastic bicomponent fibers[, as taught in the Oleszczuk et al. and Lickfield et al. references,] can be considered a multi-layer article comprising multiple layers of identical fibers."

As amended, independent claims 1 and 13 now explicitly provide that the first and second layers of wet processed mat comprise different fiber formulations. The claimed invention, therefore, clearly differs from the single mass of wet processed bonded fibrous mat taught in the cited references even if the mat is considered a multi-layer article comprising multiple layers of identical fibers as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, the Oleszczuk et al. and Lickfield et al. references fail to provide a proper basis under 35 USC § 102(b) for rejecting amended independent claims 1 and 13 and these claims as well as claims 4-5, 9-12, 14-15 and 19-22 dependent thereon should be formally allowed.

B. Claims 6-8 and 16-18 clearly patentably distinguish over Oleszczuk et al. or Lickfield et al. references when considered in further combination with U.S. Patent 4,813,948 to Insley.

The primary references to Oleszczuk et al. and Lickfield et al. fail to teach or suggest a liner/insulator including first and second layers of wet processed mat directly bonded together where those first and second layers have different fiber formulations. The secondary reference to Insley does nothing to address this shortcoming of the primary references and, accordingly, claims 6-8 and 16-18 patentably distinguish over the art and should be allowed.

C. Claim 23 very clearly patentably distinguishes over the Oleszczuk and Lickfield patents when considered in combination with U.S. Patent 6,548,431 to Bansal et al. or U.S. Patent No. 4,508,133 to Malaney.

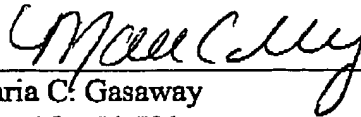
The primary references to Oleszczuk et al. and Lickfield et al. fail to teach or suggest a liner/insulator including first and second layers of wet processed mat

directly bonded together where those first and second layers have different fiber formulations. The secondary references to Bansal et al. and Malaney do nothing to address this shortcoming of the primary references and, accordingly, claim 23 patentably distinguishes over the art and should be allowed.

D. Conclusion

As amended all the pending claims patentably distinguish over the prior art and should be formally allowed. Upon careful review and consideration it is believed the Examiner will agree with this proposition. Accordingly, the early issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited. Any fees required in connection with this Response may be debited to Deposit Account 50-0568.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: 2-1-06